REMARKS

This Response is submitted in reply to the Office Action dated February 27, 2009. Claims 1, 2, 5 and 7 to 17 are pending in the present application. Claims 3, 4 and 6 stand canceled. Claims 1, 2, 5 and 7 to 17 are hereby amended. No new matter has been added by such amendments. Support for these amendments can be found, for example, in at least paragraphs [0071] to [0072] of the published application. Claims 1 and 7 to 9 are in independent form. Please charge Deposit Account No. 02-1818 for all payments due in connection with this Response.

The Office Action rejected Claims 1, 2, 5, and 7-17 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,732,148 to Estrada et al. ("Estrada"), U.S. Patent No. 6,772,195 to Hatlelid et al. ("Hatlelid"), U.S. Patent No. 6,446,112 to Bunny et al. ("Bunny"), and U.S. Patent No. 6,496,851 to Morris et al. ("Morris"). The Office Action stated that these rejections are further supported by mIRC Version Notes taken from http://www.mirc.co.uk/versions.txt ("mIRC Version Notes"). In light of the amendments herein, Applicant respectfully disagrees with these rejections.

Amended independent Claims 1 includes, among other elements, "processing means for maintaining a user space within the virtual space, wherein the user space comprises spatial locations that virtually represent areas owned and occupied by a first user, wherein said spatial locations are rendered as three dimensional images, wherein said spatial locations includes a first spatial location rendered as a first three dimensional image . . . [and] placing means for placing the list of spatial locations stored in the storage means at a position in said first three dimensional spatial location rendered as said first three dimensional image, wherein the position in said first three dimensional spatial location is designated by the first user and other users are able to use the list of predetermined spatial locations." Estrada, Hatlelid, Bunny Morris and/or mIRC Version Notes do not disclose the combination of the foregoing elements.

Page 9 of the Office Action stated:

> Estrada shows a "place creation" method and database storage of col. 18, lines 14-35, and 56-62, which include a user creating a room containing pages analogous to the claimed "spatial locations, which are subsequently accessed and navigated by other users of the room. The pages are maintained in a list, "PageLibrary.ntf, which provides indexing infrastructure" (col. 18, lines 56-62). The list is created (placed) at the same time and same location as the QuickPlace. Therefore, the

examiner contends that Estrada does indeed teach "storing a list of spatial locations" and "a placing means for placing the list of spatial locations".

It appears that the Office Action interprets the room containing pages of Estrada as the spatial locations of Claim 1. However, the room containing pages of Estrada (i.e., the spatial locations of Claim 1) are not rendered as three dimensional images. On the other hand, the spatial locations of Claim 1 are rendered as three dimensional images. That is, the information processing apparatus of amended Claim 1 includes, among other elements, "processing means for maintaining a user space within the virtual space, wherein the user space comprises spatial locations that virtually represent areas owned and occupied by a first user, wherein said spatial locations are rendered as three dimensional images, wherein said spatial locations includes a first spatial location rendered as a first three dimensional image."

Moreover, the list of Estrada is not placed at a position in a spatial location rendered as a three dimensional image. On the other hand, the information processing apparatus of amended Claim includes, among other elements, "placing means for placing the list of spatial locations stored in the storage means at a position in said first spatial location rendered as said first three dimensional image, wherein the position in said first three dimensional spatial location is designated by the first user and other users are able to use the list of predetermined spatial locations . . . ."

For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claim 1 is patentably distinguished over Estrada, Hatlelid, Bunny, Morris and mIRC Version Notes in condition for allowance. Dependent Claims 2, 5 and 14 depend directly from amended independent Claim 1 and are also allowable for the reasons given with respect to Claim 1 and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

Independent Claims 7 to 9 each include certain similar elements to independent Claim 1. For reasons similar to those discussed above with respect to independent Claim 1, independent Claims 7 to 9 (and dependent Claims 10 to 13 and 15 to 17) are each patentably distinguished over Estrada, Hatlelid, Bunny, Morris and mIRC Version Notes and in condition for allowance.

An earnest endeavor has been made to place this application in condition for formal allowance, and allowance is courteously solicited. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this Response, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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